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## Part III. Public Participation

Public input during DNR's Capitol State Forest planning process helped DNR staff learn about the concerns, issues, expectations and values of recreation users and forest neighbors. Three types of public involvement occurred:

- **External information gathering** from a variety of sources such as individuals at the Capitol State Forest Annual Recreation User Group and Tumwater High School students
- Distribution of **user surveys** to assess user patterns, concerns and overall impressions of Capitol State Forest
- Formation of a **Citizen Working Group**, known as the Rock Candy Team, to discuss challenges and recommend improvement within the forest

The plan was combined with the Statewide Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, to analyze the effects of implementing the management goals and objectives. The SEPA process requires a public review and comment period.

### External information gathering

The planning team began gathering citizen input at the Capitol State Forest Annual Recreation User Group meeting held on January 23, 2002. The participants were divided into three smaller groups of 15 to 20 people and asked to list the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of recreation in Capitol State Forest.

The following common themes represent participants' views and concerns:

#### Trail management needs

- Materials used: amount and type (i.e., gravel, bricks, etc.)
- Evaluate trail standards used in Capitol State Forest
- Limited types of maintenance provided
- Maintain to a higher level of use
- Obtain recreation user input on trails reconstructed after logging

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### **Trail support facilities**

- Camping sites: increased opportunities needed
- Trail signs: more warning and mileage signs needed
- Parking: not enough parking for trailers

### **Access**

- Currently too many access points available to the forest
- Continued road closures decreases access to key facilities

### **Illegal and inappropriate activities**

- Uncontrolled shooting
- Dumping
- Vandalism
- Increased enforcement needed
- Enable recreation users to assist with enforcement

### **Recreation user groups/volunteers**

- In the forest, we do not take the time to talk to one another
- Inability to relate to other recreation user groups
- Limits to what volunteers can do
- Groups can work well together and communicate amongst each other
- Cross-event education: educate recreation users and recreation users get to talk to each other
- Website needed to let citizens know about volunteer opportunities

### **Alternative funding**

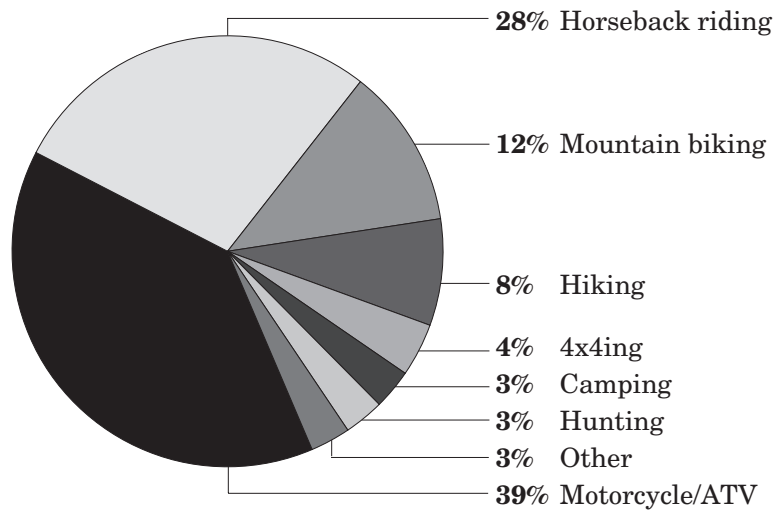
- Charge a fee, if funds go to recreation
- Develop a trust for recreation

## User survey

The Capitol State Forest Public Use Survey was conducted to gather information from a broader base of recreational users in Capitol State Forest. Surveys were distributed at recreational facilities and trails and at events organized by DNR staff, the Capitol State Forest Working Group, and other DNR volunteers. DNR's website also provided the survey to users remotely. We received 407 completed surveys by the deadline of December 31, 2002.

The following information shows some of the themes that emerged from the survey results. This survey is not randomly sampled and is not scientifically representative of a larger population.

**Figure 5: Primary use**



**Chart 5: Percentage of primary activity**

Primary Activity in the Forest	Number	Percent
Motorcycling/ATVing	154	39%
Equestrian	112	28%
Mountain biking	50	12%
Hiking	34	8%
4x4ing	18	4%
Camping	13	3%
Hunting	13	3%
Other	13	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100%</b>

The pie (above) and the chart (right) distinguish the percentage of total survey respondents (407) by primary recreation type.

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## Survey results

The survey results are summarized into two areas: information related to an individual's forest visit, and information related to the respondents' overall impression of the forest.

The respondents answered questions related to their forest visits including: frequency of use, length of visit, who visits the forest, average driving distance, use of the forest roads and facilities, and type of camping equipment. Below are the highlights from these responses:

### Frequency of use

- Over half of all respondents visit Capitol State Forest several times (2 to 11 times) a year
- A quarter of all respondents visit the forest at least once a month

### Time of visit

- Weekends are the most popular time for all users to visit the forest
- Eighty-five percent of the respondents stated weekend mornings and weekend afternoons as the time when they visit the forest

### Who visits the forest

- Approximately 90 percent of all users visit the forest with a group, either with a small group of family and friends or as a participant in an organized event
- Less than eight percent visit the forest alone

### Average driving time

- Motorcycle/ATV users travel one to two hours each way to visit Capitol State Forest
- Equestrian users travel 30 to 44 minutes each way
- Mountain bikers on average travel 16 to 29 minutes
- Hikers travel less than 15 minutes to the forest

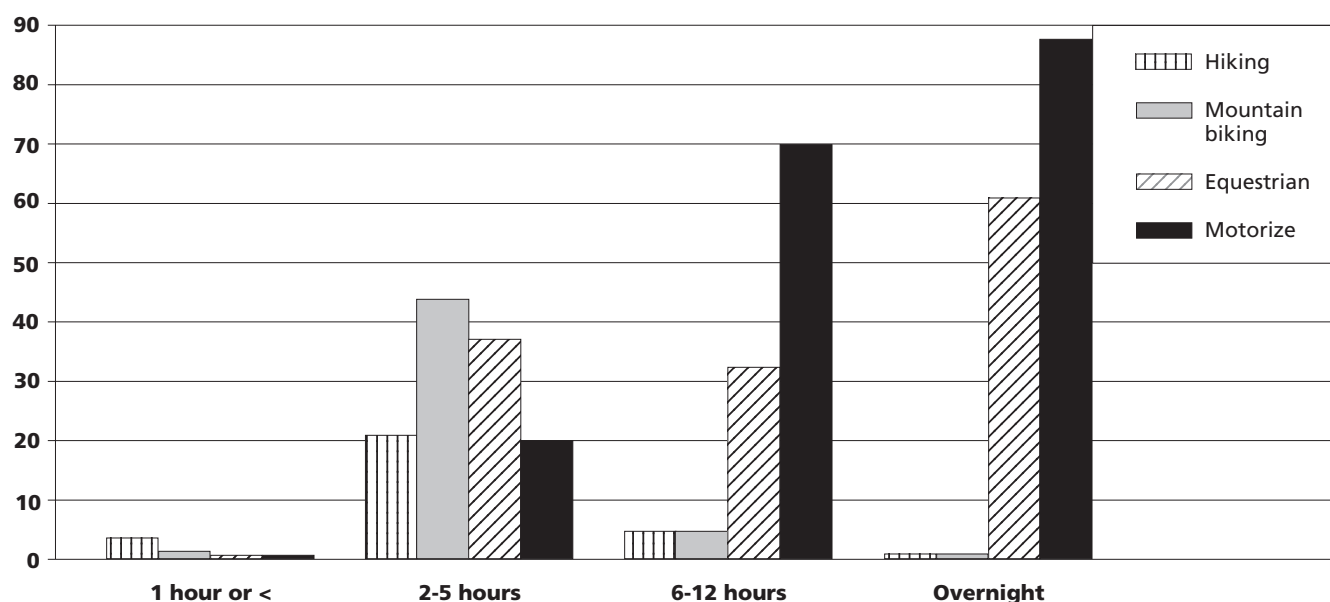
### Length of visit

- Most of the motorcycle/ATV and equestrian users visit the forest from a six to twelve hour visit, or even overnight
- Mountain bikers and hikers visit Capitol State Forest for shorter periods of time, ranging from two to five hours per visit

### Use of forest roads and facilities

- Trail use is the primary reason most users visit the forest
- Hunters stated they used gravel roads most when visiting the forest

**Figure 6: Average length of stay - data from user survey results**



- Motorcycle/ATV and equestrian riders stated trailheads and campgrounds as their second and third most popular place when visiting the forest
- Mountain bikers and hikers stated they use gravel (second most popular place) and paved roads (third most popular place) more often than trailheads and campgrounds

### Type of camping equipment

- Motorcycle/ATV users preferred to use fifth-wheels/trailers or motor homes when camping
- Equestrian users most commonly use campers and tents
- Mountain bikers and hikers overwhelmingly use tents as their preferred camping equipment

Next, the respondents' overall impression of the forest is detailed with such questions as: what is their greatest concern in the forest; overall satisfaction with DNR maintenance, signage and feeling of safety; each respondent's willingness to pay a fee and general demographic information. Below is a summary of the responses.

### Greatest concern

The top three concerns in order of priority for each user type are provided below:

- Motorcycle/ATV users are most concerned about garbage dumping, maintenance of trails, and overcrowding
- Equestrian users are most concerned about conflicts between users, maintenance of trails and garbage dumping

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- Mountain bikers are most concerned about maintenance of trails, environmental damage, and garbage dumping
  - Hikers top three areas of concern are garbage dumping, environmental damage, and conflicts between users

#### **Users satisfaction**

- Roads and trails signage: more than two-thirds of all respondents agree DNR roads and trails are well-marked
- Facility and trail maintenance: more than two-thirds of all respondents agree DNR's facilities and trails are maintained adequately
- Hikers did not agree that facilities are adequately maintained
- All users, except hikers, feel safe in the forest

*A general timeline of the public outreach component and the Rock Candy Team Meetings is provided in Appendix E.*

#### **Willingness to pay a fee**

- Sixty-eight percent of all users are willing to pay a fee to visit the forest

#### **Demographic information**

- Over 90 percent of the respondents are recreation users, with the remaining 10 percent of respondents being neighbors
- Most of the respondents who are motorcycle/ATV and mountain bike riders are between the ages of 36 and 49; equestrian riders age range between 36 and 65 years of age; hikers are most commonly 50 to 65 years old
- Male respondents dominate motorcycle/ATV use, mountain biking, hiking and hunting. Female respondents dominate equestrian and camping
- Less than five percent of all respondents were disabled. The largest percentage of disabled recreation users are equestrian riders, with 10 percent of this community stating they have a disability

### **Citizen Working Group**

The role of the working group was to provide information and recommendations regarding recreation in Capitol State Forest. Each member represented a larger group of recreation users, local business representatives and/or neighbors, and actively gathered input from their respective group(s) throughout the process.

Upon receiving 42 applications from interested individuals, 17 citizens were selected. Selection criteria gave greater weight to those individuals who cross multiple interest groups (i.e., user, neighbor, etc.); are affiliated with groups associated with Capitol State Forest; and exhibit an ability to share information with others. The goal was to obtain a representative sample of user types who use various geographical areas within the forest.

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Representation on the Citizen Working Group included:

- Motorized users - motorcycle/ORV riders (3)
- Non-motorized users - horse riders (4), mountain bikers (3), hikers (3)
- Other - shooting/archery (1), private sector/business (1), multiple use, including: hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, nature observation, pleasure driving, camping, picnicking, target shooting and mushroom gathering (2)

The Citizen Working Group (Rock Candy Team) members were:

Josh Amos	Eddie Armstrong	Ed Barber
Paul Butler	Alex Callender	John Deibert
Steve Erwood	Judy Francis	Clint King
Ronald Knapp	Elizabeth Livesay	Walter Olsen
Norman Rustvold	Rick Schmeling	Ben Walters
Peter Skowland	Steve Tjelde	

## ROCK CANDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Citizen Working Group concentrated its efforts on developing strategies around three general areas:

- Program-related strategies or initiatives
- Methods to address public abuse
- Future development or maintenance of recreation facilities and trails

### Program-related strategies or initiatives

- Increase signage at entrances and on trails regarding the rules, personal responsibility, and how to contact the DNR
- Increase volunteer visibility via volunteer business cards or vests
- Distribute trail information pamphlets, consolidated messages through other written materials, as well as describe the rules and responsibilities
- Continue to develop the Capitol State Forest websites
- Develop a presentation that volunteers could give to community groups
- Increase on-the-ground presence through the volunteer-driven program, such as Forest Watch
- Develop a mechanism for citizens to directly contact a law officer about a crime and serve as a tool, such as the Crime Stoppers Program, to diminish abuse

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- Communicate etiquette standards, such as on signs and other written materials, similar to the Leave No Trace program

## **Methods to address public abuse**

The Citizen Working Group prioritized its top three areas of concern related to the methods of how best to address or manage public abuse. The methods were separated into three areas: education, engineering, and enforcement. The following list illustrates some of the recommendations the group developed. Some of these recommendations have been implemented, while others may be implemented over time.

### **Education**

- Create a brochure of allowed uses with rules
- Work with event organizers to educate them on regulations, procedures, etc.
- Educate the public using multimedia presentations and/or pictures

### **Engineering**

- Limit access (i.e., gates and other devices)
- Use overlapping trenches to limit dumping
- Ban shooting except in isolated, designated spots

### **Enforcement**

- Develop a Crime Stoppers program
- Increase fines and give proceeds directly to enforce rules
- Place signs at forest entrances stating rules

## **Future development or maintenance of recreation facilities and trails**

After reviewing the forest issues with region staff members, the Citizen Working Group developed recommendations for the facilities and trails within the Capitol State Forest. In developing these recommendations, the group was asked to look at the entire forest and provide recommendations for the future of the facilities and trails, while keeping in mind, the forest management activities that occur, the type of current use the forest receives, long-term funding needs, and the impact of the use upon the environment. These recommendations can be found in Appendix G.



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## Incorporating citizen recommendations

The recommendations developed by the Citizens Work Group concerning program strategies and initiatives and how to address public abuse have been incorporated in various sections throughout the plan. These include items such as:

- Increase signage at entrances and on trails regarding forest-wide rules, personal responsibility, etiquette standards and DNR contact information
- Increase volunteer visibility by issuing ID cards, vests or caps
- Distribute information pamphlets that convey rules and regulations of the forest and trail systems
- Continue to develop the Capitol State Forest website
- Increase on-the-ground presence through the volunteer driven program, such as Forest Watch

The recommendations developed by the Citizens Work Group concerning future development and maintenance of facilities and trails were compiled and presented to the Management Advisory Team (Fuzzy Top). Next, facility and trail management strategies were developed by merging several of the recommendations from the citizens working group, feedback from the surveys, and direction from the management team. Final incorporated management strategies for facilities and trails can be found in Part II, Recreation Management. Strategies for each facility can be found in Appendix H and possible future trail additions in Appendix J.

